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Public Health Laboratories Implement New Viral Load Test for HIV1

To health care providers:

Effective August 16, 2010, the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) public health laboratories (PHL) began to transition to a new human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-1 Viral Load assay. The first site to convert to the new system will be PHL, Toronto. All four Ontario HIV1 Viral Load testing sites are expected to be converted by the end of October, 2010.

The Abbott RealTime HIV1 test which uses the m2000 automated system will replace the current Siemens bDNA test system. In the comparison of the two assays, the viral loads correlate well with 99 per cent of values within 1 log (10) copies/ml between tests.

This new assay is an in vitro reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) assay for the quantitation of HIV-1 in human plasma from HIV-1 infected individuals with results in the range of 40 to 10,000,000 copies/mL. This assay is intended for use in conjunction with clinical presentation and other laboratory markers for disease prognosis and for use as an aid in assessing viral response to antiretroviral treatment as measured by changes in plasma HIV-1 RNA levels.

Until the transition to the new assay is complete, HIV-1 viral load samples may be tested by either one of these two assays.

How to interpret what assay was used?

- If the HIV test indicates “Abbott HIV 1 Viral Load (RT PCR)” then the specimen has been tested using the new Abbott test system.
- If the HIV test indicates “Versant HIV1 bDNA 3.0” then it was tested using the Siemens test system.

For further information:

- HIV Laboratory at **416-235-5727**, or contact your local OAHPP laboratory.
- For the OAHPP Specimen Collection Guide and previous Labstracts refer to <http://www.oahpp.ca/publichealthlaboratories.php>
- Public Health Agency of Canada website: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca